

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT



Application No. 14174, of Howard University, pursuant to Sub-section 8207.2 of the Zoning Regulations, for a special exception under Paragraph 3101.46 for approval of a campus plan to permit use of the subject premises with an addition as the Howard University Divinity School in an R-1-B District at premises 4101 - 14th Street, N.E., (Square 4157, Parcels 146/56, 146/67, 146/68, 146/69, 146/73 and 147/169).

HEARING DATE: September 19, 1984  
DECISION DATE: October 3, 1984

FINDINGS OF FACT:

1. The subject site is located on the east side of 14th Street, N.E., between Taylor Street on the north and Randolph Street on the south. The site is in an R-1-B District and is known as premises 4101 - 14th Street, N.E.
2. The subject site is an irregularly shaped nine-sided figure composed of six irregularly shaped parcels. The total land area of the site is approximately twenty-six acres.
3. The subject property is improved with a university classroom and dormitory building which was formerly known as the Holy Name College. The existing facility is located at the approximate center of the site and the remainder of the site is wooded on all sides of the college building. Howard University recently acquired the site and proposes to renovate the structure for use as the Howard University Divinity School.
4. There is access to and from the subject site through 14th Street on the west and through Taylor Street on the north. The main access to the building is from 14th Street via a tree-lined driveway to a circular parking area and drop off point at the building's main entry. An existing service drive links Taylor Street on the north with the building's rear delivery and service area.
5. The neighborhood surrounding the subject site is developed primarily with single-family dwellings comprising a mixture of detached, semi-detached and row dwellings. Immediately south of the subject site is the Franciscan Monastery site which is slightly larger than the subject site. The neighborhood is zoned R-1-B on the north, east

and south of the subject site. An R-2 District is located to the west of the site. The neighborhood is known as Brookland.

6. The subject building is a three story structure with partial basement and sub-basement, enclosing a seventy-nine foot by 100 foot courtyard. The building contains dormitory rooms and a chapel on the second floor, dormitory rooms and library reading room on the third floor, and lecture rooms, faculty and administrative rooms on the first floor. Kitchen and supplies, dining room, library and reading room are located at the basement level. Until its recent acquisition by Howard University, the building had been used as a seminary classroom and residence facility.

7. Howard University's present School of Religion is located nearby at 1240 Randolph Street, N.E. in a R-2 District. That property was approved for use by the BZA in 1977. The new Divinity School needs larger quarters to house its growing population and burgeoning resource material. In that regard, it is proposed to move the Divinity School into the Holy Name College building after modifications are complete.

8. The applicant proposes to up-grade the Holy Name College building in the following ways: (a) Construction of a library addition on two levels in the existing courtyard and (b) Renovation of the existing building to bring all spaces up to code, and to increase the amount of classroom lecture, seminar and other ancillary spaces to meet its current and future teaching and research spatial needs.

9. The implementation of the proposed renovation, conversion and addition requires a special exception under Paragraph 3101.46 for approval of a campus plan to permit use of the subject premises with an addition as the Howard University Divinity School in an R-1-B District.

10. The Board is authorized to grant special exceptions under Sub-section 8207.2 of the Zoning Regulations where in the judgement of the Board such special exceptions will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and maps and will not tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring property in accordance with said Zoning Regulations and map.

11. Paragraph 3101.46 provides that a college or university which is an academic institution of higher learning may be permitted in an R-1-B District as a special exception, provided that:

- A. Such use is so located that it is not likely to become objectionable to neighboring property

because of noise, traffic, number of students, or other objectionable conditions;

- B. In R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4, R-5-A and R-5-B Districts the maximum bulk requirements normally applicable in such districts may be increased for specific buildings or structures provided the total bulk of all buildings and structures on the campus shall not exceed the gross floor area prescribed for the R-5-B District;
- C. The applicant shall submit to the Board a plan for developing the campus as a whole, showing the location, height, and bulk, where appropriate, of all present and proposed improvements, including, but not limited to buildings, parking and loading facilities, screening, signs, streets, and public utility facilities, athletic and other recreational facilities, and a description of all activities conducted or to be conducted therein, and of the capacity of all present and proposed campus development;
- D. Within a reasonable distance of the college or university campus and subject to compliance with the provisions of Sub-paragraph 3101.461 and Sub-section 8207.2 the Board may also permit the interim use of land or improved property with any use which the Board may determine is a proper college or university function; and;
- E. Before taking final action on an application for such use, the Board shall have submitted the application to the District of Columbia Office of Planning and the District of Columbia Department of Public Works for review and report.

12. The existing building contains approximately 84,784 gross square feet. The new courtyard library will contain a total of 15,800 gross square feet per level, yielding a grand total of 100,584 gross square feet. The library lower level would occur at the building's basement level while the upper level would align with the existing first floor "promenade." The roof of the courtyard library coincides with the existing second floor level and will be constructed as an open, landscaped promenade deck with ample outdoor seating built around large planters containing shade trees. A quiet indoor-outdoor environment is thus created for relaxation and study and at the same time returning the grade level courtyard displaced by the library construction. The levels are connected by a new stair and elevator accessible from 1st floor and basement lobbies.

13. The new Howard Divinity library houses several special collections and acquisitions such as the Afro-American, Auburn, Dewey, and Library of Congress reserve and stored volumes. Growth projections of the 1983/84 holdings indicate a rate increase of 2,400 volumes per year. Hence, the need for quarters which would allow for increased flexibility and storage capabilities. An existing library space at the basement south wing would be annexed to the new lower library floor. This area will house rare books, the Auburn and Dewey Collections and three group study rooms. These combined spaces net a total of 3,600 net square feet.

14. At the basement, first and second levels, a total of six classrooms and seminar rooms will be provided, yielding a total of 5,120 square feet. The existing 2,300 square feet chapel on the 2nd floor will be converted from its present "Monastic Format" to a 278 seat chapel/lecture hall with non-fixed stackable chairs, plus thirty-two spaces for a choir, a total of 310 spaces. This space will be directly accessible to the elevator and promenade deck via a new enclosed second floor promenade lobby.

15. All electrical, lighting, H.V.A.C., plumbing, electronic security and fire detection/suppression systems would be up-graded to meet current building code requirements. The building would be made accessible to physically handicapped persons throughout. Support services will be provided as per programmatic requirements including faculty and administrative offices, reception, student and faculty/staff lounge, and new and converted restroom facilities at all levels for female students and employees,

16. The Divinity School is scheduled ultimately to enroll 180 to 200 students. The applicant expects to enroll 180 students by its opening date, on August 1, 1985, of which about forty-five would be housed on-campus at the Holy Name building. There would be forty-five available dormitory rooms and three guest rooms on the second floor and forty-four dormitory rooms on the third floor. The majority of unoccupied rooms on the third floor are slated to become future offices. The number of visitors is expected to be about five per day and the number of staff and teachers to be twenty-four. No long range physical expansion is contemplated.

17. The existing circular drop-off/parking area at the front entry will have its existing twenty-one spaces modified to include both regular and handicapped spaces. Three new parking areas to the north and northwest would interlink with the existing parking and driveways, and would allow access to the lobby via a new handicapped ramp. A grand total of 106 spaces will be provided including five handicapped spaces. The parking areas would be heavily

screened from 14th and Taylor Streets by existing trees and new landscaping and adequate security lighting would be incorporated.

18. Because of the size of the property and distance of the building from its closest residential neighbors and other factors such as the character of the facility, it is unlikely that any excessive noise and/or traffic problems will be generated. Overflow parking, should it occur, can easily be absorbed within the property lines.

19. The Office of Planning, by report dated September 12, 1984, recommended that the application be approved subject to the condition that when and if the scope and/or intensity of activity on the Divinity School campus is expanded or altered the applicant would seek the necessary modification of the campus plan as required by the Zoning Regulations. The Board concurs with the reasoning and the recommendation of the Office of Planning.

20. The Department of Public Works (DPW), by report dated July 27, 1984, made a favorable assessment of the impact of the proposal. The DPW reported that approximately seventy-eight persons would be expected to use transit and approximately ninety-five persons would be auto drivers. The applicant is providing a total of 112 parking spaces, which is considerably more than is required by the Zoning Regulations and which could adequately accommodate the parking demand of the campus population. The Zoning Regulations require that the school not pose any objectionable traffic or other conditions to the surrounding neighborhood. The school is unlikely to pose any objectionable traffic conditions to the surrounding neighborhood. Based on the assessment, the DPW found that the proposed school expansion would have no adverse traffic or parking impact on the surrounding community. The Board concurs with the findings of the Department of Public Works.

21. Advisory Neighborhood Commission 5A, by report dated August 28, 1984, endorsed the project as designed by Howard University. The endorsement was based on a site inspection by a Commissioner of ANC 5A, his examination of the plans and his discussion of the plans with residents of affected area. The residents interviewed were property owners in the immediate vicinity. Approximately ninety-nine percent indicated their approval for the proposed use by Howard as a divinity school dormitory and study. These residents added that their endorsement would be contingent upon Howard University providing ample parking facilities so that the residents and users of the Divinity School would not encroach on neighborhood residents' parking. The Board is required by statute to give "great weight" to the issues and concerns of the ANC when those issues and concerns are

reduced to writing. The Board concurs with the issues and concerns of ANC 5A and its recommendation.

22. Three neighbors testified in qualified opposition to the application. Their opposition was based on a need for more information about the location, size and design of the expanded parking area to be provided at the site. The neighbors expressed apprehension that the expanded parking area would not be sufficiently buffered from the streets adjoining their residences and that the construction of a terrace for the new parking area would severely thin a grove of trees that presently buffers the site from nearby residences. The applicant testified in response to the opposition and explained the plans for expansion of the parking area. The testimony emphasized that the area would continue to be buffered by existing trees and the addition of new trees to replace any that are destroyed during construction. The Board finds that the applicant has taken adequate steps to meet the concerns of the neighbors in opposition.

#### CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND OPINION:

Based on the findings of fact and the evidence of record, the Board concludes that the applicant is seeking a special exception for approval of a campus plan to permit use of the subject premises with an addition as the Howard University Divinity School in an R-1-B District. The granting of such a special exception requires a showing through substantial evidence that the proposed use satisfies the requirements of Paragraph 3101.46 and Sub-section 8207.2 of the D.C. Zoning Regulations.

The Board concludes that the applicant has met the burden of proof. The proposed use will be so located that it is not likely to become objectionable to neighboring property because of noise, traffic, number of students, or other objectionable conditions. The total bulk of all buildings and structures on the campus will not exceed the gross floor area prescribed for the R-5-B District. The applicant has submitted to the Board a plan for developing the campus as a whole, showing the improvements, a description of all activities conducted or to be conducted therein, and of the capacity of all present and proposed campus development. No interim use of the property will occur. The application has been submitted to the D.C. Office of Planning and the D.C. Department of Public Works. It received a favorable review and report from both agencies.

The Board concludes that granting the proposed special exception will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and maps and will not tend to affect adversely the use of neighboring property. The Board concludes that it has accorded to the ANC the "great

weight" to which it is entitled.

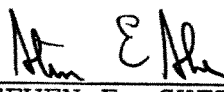
Accordingly, it is hereby ORDERED that the application is GRANTED, SUBJECT to the following CONDITIONS:

1. Landscaping and parking layout on the subject site shall be as shown on the site plan marked as Exhibit No. 20A of the record.
2. The number of students shall not exceed 200, with a maximum of twenty-eight faculty and staff.
3. Operation of the facility shall be limited to the Howard University Divinity School.

VOTE: 4-0 (Douglas J. Patton, Maybelle T. Bennett, William F. McIntosh and Carrie L. Thornhill to grant; Charles R. Norris not present, not voting).

BY ORDER OF THE D.C. BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT

ATTESTED BY:

  
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STEVEN E. SHER  
Executive Director

FINAL DATE OF ORDER: 19 NOV 1984

UNDER SUB-SECTION 8204.3 OF THE ZONING REGULATIONS, "NO DECISION OR ORDER OF THE BOARD SHALL TAKE EFFECT UNTIL TEN DAYS AFTER HAVING BECOME FINAL PURSUANT TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL RULES OF PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE BEFORE THE BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT."

THIS ORDER OF THE BOARD IS VALID FOR A PERIOD OF SIX MONTHS AFTER THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THIS ORDER, UNLESS WITHIN SUCH PERIOD AN APPLICATION FOR A BUILDING PERMIT OR CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY IS FILED WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS.

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